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RESEARCH STUDY

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MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON THE ENVIRONMENT: 1971-1972

The attached research study (SAS-1) was prepared as a supporting paper for a report on US Priority Interests in the Environmental Activities of International Organizations. The latter report is being prepared by Task Force III of the International Standing Committee on the Environment and will contain the attached study as an appendix. Because of its general usefulness beyond this immediate purpose, SAS-1 is being issued separately to give it wider distribution.

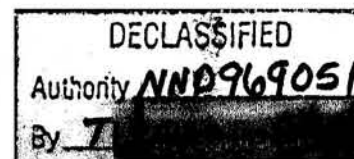
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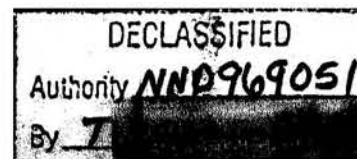
MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON THE ENVIRONMENT: 1971-1972

This report summarizes information on two international conferences on the environment which will be convened under United Nations auspices. It includes a brief discussion of their purpose, subject matter scope, and likely outcome. A list of pertinent UN documents is appended for reference.

ABSTRACT

Two major international conferences on the environment are being planned under the auspices of the United Nations. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Conference on Problems Related to Environment is scheduled to convene in May 1971 in Prague; the UN Conference on the Human Environment will be held in June 1972 in Stockholm. The former will concentrate on the environmental problems of industrialized nations, particularly countries in the European region. The latter will be more comprehensive in scope; it will discuss the global aspects of various forms of pollution, as well as the adverse effects on the environment that might result from future economic development in the less developed countries.

Both conferences aim to formulate recommendations for action that might be undertaken by national governments and international organizations. Institutional arrangements for dealing with environmental problems will be discussed, including guidelines for cooperation among participating countries.

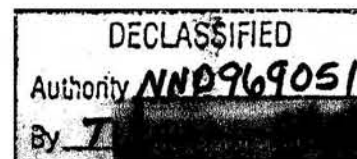


The 1971 ECE Conference: Emphasis on the Urban Way of Life

The basic theme of the ECE Conference is the environment of man in cities and urbanized areas. Discussion of this general topic, as well as the recommendations that emerge, will provide an important contribution to the more comprehensive UN Conference in 1972 since a principal source of environmental pollution is the industrial activity of developed nations.

All ECE members have been invited to prepare country monographs which will include their respective statements of recommended priorities for international cooperation. About half of the ECE countries are currently scheduled to present one or more discussion papers, case studies, or topical reports. Inputs will also be made by various UN specialized agencies and by non-UN international organizations such as OECD, European Communities, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

The upshot of the Prague Conference is likely to be agreement on the need and desirability of greater cooperation in exchanging information, sharing experience on pollution problems, determining criteria and standards, and improving monitoring systems. It is possible, though less likely, that significant progress will be made in such areas as regulatory measures for controlling pollution and joint management of shared natural resources. A work program for the ECE will be defined, but its implementation will depend upon the extent to which participating countries are willing and able to allocate resources for environmental improvement.

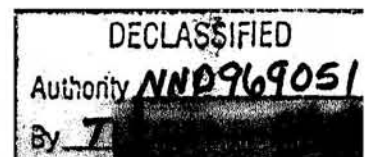


The 1972 UN Conference: Globalism and Economic Development

The Stockholm Conference is intended to be a world-wide convocation to stimulate action on environmental problems which affect the interests of all nations. It will provide both a challenge and an opportunity to come to grips with the issues posed by the potentially adverse impact on the environment that might result from rapid economic development in the LDCs.

The main outlines of the Conference program have already been agreed upon. Discussion topics have been organized under three broad headings: (1) Environmental Aspects of Human Settlements, (2) Rational Management of Natural Resources, and (3) Environmental Degradation from Pollution and Nuisances. A wide variety of papers are to be prepared by UN member countries, the UN Secretariat, specialized agencies and other components of the UN system, and non-UN international organizations. More definitive arrangements regarding the agenda and country participation will be made at the January 1971 meeting of the Preparatory Committee and at the XXVI Session of the UN General Assembly next year.

Recommendations for action by national governments and by international bodies will be considered at the Conference. Emphasis will be given to (1) programs designed to help developing countries minimize or forestall the adverse effects on the environment that result from rapid industrialization and unplanned urbanization, and (2) problems that are difficult or

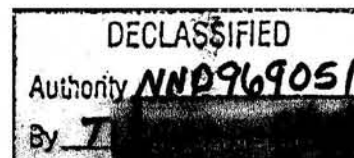


impossible to solve by one country alone or whose solution would be greatly facilitated by multilateral agreements, including co-operative arrangements within the UN framework.

A draft Declaration on the Human Environment will be submitted for debate. It will probably be a statement of general principles about the rights and obligations of men, nations, and international organizations in regard to the environment. Differences in attitudes toward environmental pollution on the part of the developing countries and the industrialized states will be difficult to reconcile. There is a good chance that the substance of any declaration accepted by a majority of the participants will be fairly ambiguous in order to allow for different interpretations consistent with diverse national interests.

One or more proposals to establish a new international agency for environmental affairs will almost certainly be introduced. This issue is virtually unavoidable, but it may remain unresolved for some time. Conceivably, the Conference might produce a recommendation which could be adopted at the XXVII session (1972) of the UN General Assembly.

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[Omitted here is the body of the study.]